

Report

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites

■ 1.0 Site Description



Vanderbilt Mansion



**Eleanor Roosevelt's
Val-Kill**



**FDR Library
& Museum**



**Home of Franklin D.
Roosevelt**

The NPS jointly administers the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Val-Kill) and the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site (NHS). These sites are located in Hyde Park, New York, as is the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the FDR Library and Museum. Val-Kill is the only home ever owned by Eleanor Roosevelt and served as her private retreat until her death in 1962. The site includes outbuildings, flower gardens, a swimming pool, as well as the cottage. The Vanderbilt Mansion was the country home of Frederick William Vanderbilt and was completed in 1898. The site includes additional buildings, trails, gardens, and a Visitor Center. The home of FDR and the Library and Museum are located on 33 acres. Together, these sites represent an important period in United States history and are situated in the beautiful Mid-Hudson Valley.

The three sites form a triangle about two miles apart and traveling between them requires the use of an automobile, which is the mode of most visitors. About 10 percent of the visitors to the sites arrive in private tour buses.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Currently, there are no Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) connecting the sites themselves. A limited-service transit system, the Dutchess County LOOP Bus connects Hyde Park with Poughkeepsie and it is possible to travel to the sites by bus. Service frequency is approximately once every two hours on weekdays with no weekend service to Hyde Park.

When first developed as an historic site, Val-Kill was designed to be accessed via shuttle bus. The parking lot is small (15 cars) and the road is not designed for general traffic. Previously, a shuttle system was operated for a two-year period, but was discontinued due to insufficient ridership. The shuttle, which ran between the FDR Home and Val-Kill, did not attract riders primarily because it had a separate user fee. In addition, the bus was used only for transportation with no interpretation included.

The Vanderbilt Mansion site includes a small parking area and large open field for overflow parking. During summer weekends and in October, the field is used frequently for overflow parking.

The FDR home (operated by the NPS) and FDR library and museum (operated by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)) has a large open “shopping center” style lot. Capacity has not been exceeded this year but demand has exceeded capacity in the past.

The three sites are connected by a trail system. These trails are intended for relatively long walks (two miles) and do not serve as realistic transportation routes. Further, there is an extensive problem with Lyme Disease in the area.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

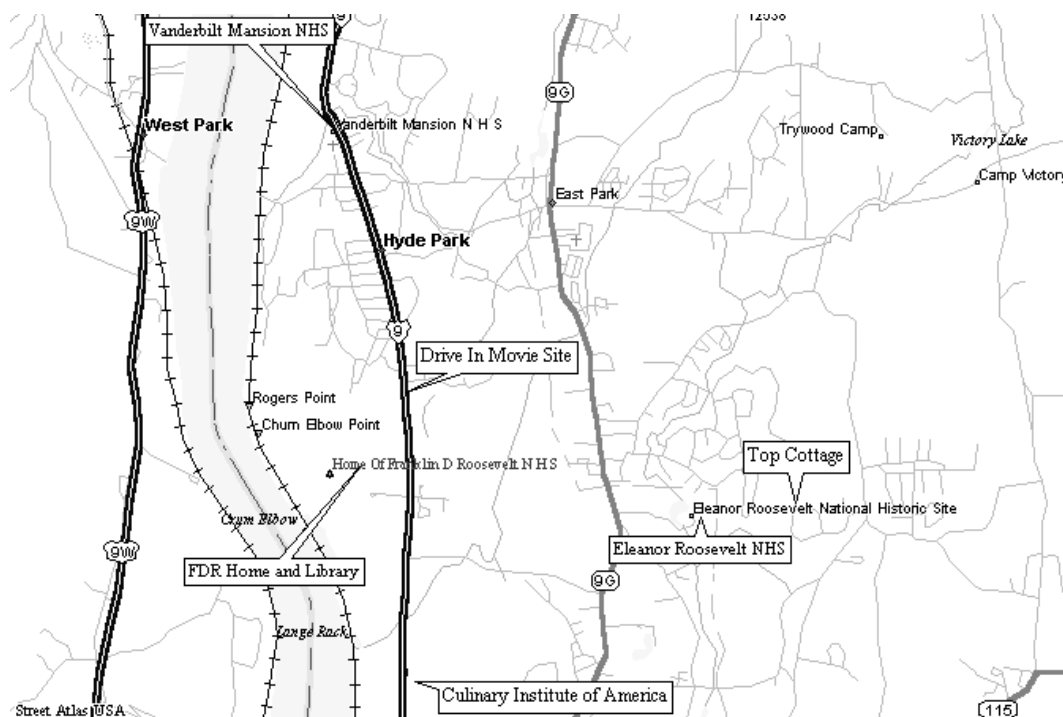
In mid-2000, the Park Service will add a fourth visitor element, Top Cottage. This property was designed by FDR to serve as his retirement home and is an excellent example of innovative accessible design. At present, the principal route to this site is via a circuitous four- to five-mile drive through a housing development. As the crow flies, however, the site is just to the east of Val-Kill (see Figure 1). A road connecting these sites used to be in place and the right of way is still available. Reconstruction of this road is estimated to cost \$2 million.

With the fourth visitor element in place, the sites are very strong candidates for a shuttle system to connect them. Further, it would be desirable to provide more frequent transit links to other transportation services, such as the rail station in Poughkeepsie, which has service to New York City.

Given the wide range of area attractions, including the Culinary Institute of America and state parks in Staatsburg just north of Hyde Park, there is also the potential for operating a

community transit service to link these sites. There is a drive-in movie theater site that is available that could become a transportation hub/welcome center site. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Location of the NPS Sites and Related Facilities



There may also be a need to develop a shuttle system within the FDR Library and Museum site. At present, the Park Service is working with NARA to develop a Visitor Center in conjunction with the library. NARA has funding to develop a visitor/educational conference center and, due to historic preservation issues, must locate this outside the 16-acre library property. Should this project go forward, the walking distance between parking and the sites of interest could become long enough as to require a shuttle service.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Given the number of sites that can be visited in the Hyde Park area, a shuttle system that connects them would dramatically enhance the visitor experience. At times, Route 9 can become heavily congested and any service that would reduce traffic on this route would be beneficial. In order to succeed, however, no additional fees should be charged for riding the bus. With two of the sites (FDR Home and Vanderbilt Mansion) located on Route 9, and with Val-Kill located on Route 9G, a loop service that connected the three sites could operate with considerable frequency during peak times, a distance of

approximately 10 miles. Further, if the Top Cottage-Val-Kill Road is constructed, the shuttle could serve Top Cottage on a spur-type line.

In addition, with the Poughkeepsie train station located 4.5 miles south of the FDR Home, an enhanced shuttle service linking the NPS sites with the rail system would enable more visitors to travel to Hyde Park by public transportation. With eight trains to New York and nine trains from New York on weekends and more frequent service on weekdays, this service can be promoted as a means to travel to the sites without a car.